

## My Road to Lean Horse 100

By Diane Adams

I never aspired to run 100 miles. The mile and two mile were my distances when I began running in high school at Loudoun Valley; and I thought that was really far. In college a friend and I began running just to stay healthy. Even though we ran up to five miles, we only ran once a week, if that. And five miles seemed really far.



The Winchester Apple Blossom 10K was my first road race, which I ran during a college break just for something to do, but I didn't get hooked on road races. Over the next few years I only ran one or two more, though I continued to run for fun and health, but never more than five or six miles

Then, in 1999, I decided to train for and run the Richmond Marathon. I wasn't working. My daughter, Annie, was nine and in school, and I had the time to train. Mike was stationed at Newport News, Virginia

with the Navy and there were great places to run. After the marathon I said, "Never again." Where have you heard those words before?

I joined the Loudoun Road Runners in 2004 after we moved to Purcellville, which was coming home for me. Of course, after running the beautiful courses in Loudoun County and enjoying the running companionship of others and listening to the chatter, I thought maybe I could run another marathon, and did, more than one.

Then, people started talking about the JFK 50 miler and how one can run 50 miles if they can run a marathon, and so I thought to give that a try, and found out that the statement was true. It was a challenge and more miles than I ever, ever thought of doing, but somebody who shall remain nameless started talking about an ultra marathon called Lean Horse in the Black Hills of South Dakota during coffee at Greenberry's one day in June, 2006; and people started putting their names down on a napkin as possible participants for either the 50K, 50 mile, or 100 mile event, and I was one of them. Although the 2006 race was in August, everyone admitted that the 2007 edition would be the one we all would enter.

I don't think I actually decided to do it until September, and didn't sign up officially for a couple more months, and August, 2007 was a long way away.

It may seem peculiar to some, but I didn't follow any specific training schedule. We did run longer on our Tuesday/Thursday runs and I tried to get another run in on Monday or Friday of five or six miles. I did at least one of the long weekend runs every weekend that Phil mapped out, and the Mule Run of 100K in June, plus a back to back 22+ miles a few weekends before the race. I maybe averaged 45-50 miles a week.

Before the race I was feeling a little nervous and excited and was thinking of the distance, but didn't really have a strategy mapped out or plan. I was just going to run. My husband, Mike and my daughter, Annie, were my crew. They had the car stocked with granola bars, cliff bars, red bull, and goo, but I don't remember eating any of the goo. The only thing I remember eating from the aid station was a cookie, but, just for the record I split it with Annie.

They also kept a change of socks, shirt, and shoes, plus blister bandages and some other stuff I might need. I certainly needed the blister bandages. When the sun went down I put on a jacket. While Mike and Annie waited for me between aid stations, they watched DVDs on the computer and talked on the cell phone (everyone from the club kept calling to see how things were going). I later learned that Steve Core was sending out status emails hourly.

For the first 35 miles or so of the race, Phil, Mike M. and mostly ran together. It was a hot day but there was a breeze blowing and we just ran along talking and enjoying the run. When we came into the aid station in Custer, my blisters had gotten really bad, so Mike (my husband) cut away part of my shoe so that the blisters wouldn't rub, and put the blister bandages on and wrapped things very well.

I took longer in Custer than at the other aid stations, but it was worth it to have those blisters taken care of. I don't know what I would have done without Mike and Annie. They kept me going.

After Custer, the three of us found ourselves moving at different paces. Though I ran some more with Phil, I found myself running alone for the last 50 miles of the race, and that was tougher. It was then that Mike began to run back to meet me from the aid stations and that was very nice. I kept going, knowing that when I saw him, I was close to the next aid station.

When night came and the temperature fell, I changed shirts and put on a jacket. Running at night was surreal. There I was, all alone in unfamiliar territory out on some trail. But, the sky was incredibly clear with every star brilliant. There was a full moon. It was gorgeous. I didn't even need my light, but I was really looking forward to finishing. I didn't think of anything other than just keeping going forward and when would I see Mike?

I never felt like I couldn't finish, though the last miles were pretty hard. The toughest part of the race was Argyle road on the way home. Argyle road was advertised as a gravel road with occasional hills, but there were many, many hills, and they were steep and long. Going out was tolerable but coming back toward the end of the race, the hills were too much. We even had to navigate cattle guards, and that is difficult enough when you're fresh and moving over them in the light of day.

Marcia ran in the last few miles with me and had to do a play by play with me because I kept thinking we were closer to the finish than we were. She had to talk me through each turn. She was really good to have had that point in the race. She knew the arrows directing the way were not well marked at the end, and truthfully my brain was not functioning at optimum level or speed.

And then Mike and Annie came out for the last bit to come in with me. When I saw the end my only thought was, "Thank God it's done. And never again." And everyone was there to welcome me in.

In looking back over the last year, though, I have to confess that I enjoyed the training the most. In some ways the finish was anticlimactic. I guess it's true that the journey is more important than the finish. The Black Hills are beautiful and totally unexpected. I would like to go back with time to just enjoy them without a race to think about. Still, after I've had some time I might think of doing Lean Horse again, maybe. There's no doubt I'm tired. It really took a lot out of me, but would I do another 100 mile race. Yup!